

Minutes

State Technical Committee Meeting

Holiday Inn Denver West – Golden, Colorado

October 12, 2005

Allen Green, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), called the meeting to order asking those in attendance to identify who they are and who they are representing.

Allen stated that cost-share allocations would be through the Colorado's ten watersheds. Recommendations were received from the ten watershed basins on the best use of funding in their watershed area. For the new fiscal year, funding is not in place, funds should be received soon. He cautioned that the budget is tight this year and agriculture is being hit hard.

We are on the down-side of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding. The new Farm Bill will indicate to us if EQIP will have funding; we still have significant funding for the next two years. We need to look at the role the EQIP program can play, and where can the funding be used to make the best impact. We need to look at the role of the State Technical Committee addressing issues, concerns and where the funds can be best spent is important. We appreciate your input.

Scott Richrath, Colorado Department Water Resources, expressed that the State Engineer would like to offer its willingness to work with the NRCS and producers when reviewing Water Quality/Quantity EQIP applications to ensure that program implementation does not result in irrigation beyond the historic acres or consumptive use of the well permit or water decree. Our Division Engineers in each watershed can serve as the point of contact for NRCS in reviewing any state compliance issues prior to expenditure by the producer for installation of drip irrigation systems, improved sprinkler irrigation systems or improved sprinkler diversion structures.

The Republican River Water Conservation District (RRWCD) Budget Committee will be making recommendations to the RRWCD board on October 13 to increase local incentives by 67% over the FY 2005 levels for producers who permanently retire their water through the EQIP Ground and Surface Water Conservation (GSWC). For permanent retirement, this would increase RRWCD contribution commitments to about \$900 for surface water users, - \$610 for ground water irrigators within one mile of the river, - \$415 from one to three miles and \$300 for three miles or more. Five-year RRWCD payments would increase slightly. Three-year RRWCD payments would remain the same as the FY 2005 levels.

Tony Puga, Resource Conservationist, NRCS, has accepted a position at the NRCS National Headquarters office as the Program Manager for the National Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Tony will do a great job for NRCS in this position and will bring a great deal of expertise to the job. His experience at the local/state level will be very beneficial to all of the states.

Allen next called on Dawn Jackson, Acting Assistant State Conservationist-Programs, NRCS. Dawn presented information on the Watersheds recommendations, all recommendations will be considered. She stated there is pressure to maximize the funding dollars, reduce cost-share, find partners to work with. The input we receive from the local partners indicate we need more cost share funds.

Dawn reviewed the role of the State Technical Committee. NRCS established a Technical Committee in Colorado to provide advice for technical considerations and technical guidelines necessary to implement conservation provisions of farm legislation. The NRCS State Conservationist chairs the committee.

The State Technical Committee also provides advice on a number of issues within a variety of conservation programs. Although the State Technical Committee has no implementation or enforcement authority, USDA gives strong consideration to the Committee's recommendations. It is very important to us to have your input.

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Dawn discussed the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002:

1. Water Quality - Reduction of non point source pollutants & Water Quality
2. Reduction in soil erosion and sedimentation from unacceptability high rates on agricultural land
3. Promotion of at-risk species habitat recovery
4. Reduction of emissions

State allocations and funding will be determined by the State Conservationist considering the advice of the State Technical Committee. The Committee will help:

- Identify State priority natural resource concerns that incorporate National priorities and measures
- Identify which of the available conservation practices should be encouraged with recommended funding levels
- NRCS will continue to rely on *Locally Led Conservation* as an important cornerstone of EQIP
- The locally led process ensures consideration of the wide variability between and within states regarding resource issues, solutions, and limitations.

Watershed Work Group Process

- Local Work Group meetings are convened to identify local resource concerns, recommended practices and cost share rates.
- Watershed Work Group meetings are convened to identify resource concerns, recommended practices and cost share rates for the watershed from the Local FY 04 - 05 EQIP & GSWC Funding by Watershed

FY 2004 and FY 2005 EQIP and GSWC Funding by Watershed

| Watershed | EQIP FY 04 | EQIP FY 05 | GSWC FY 04 | GSWC FY 05 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Colorado River | 2,380,051 | 2,367,559 | | |
| Gunnison/Dolores | 5,142,869 | 4,727,252 | | |
| Lower Arkansas | 3,191,851 | 4,542,164 | 1,144,566 | 1,129,687 |
| Lower South Platte | 2,166,791 | 2,821,989 | 629,992 | 708,385 |
| North Platte/White/Yampa | 740,152 | 620,593 | | |
| Republican | 2,272,600 | 2,269,223 | 576,792 | 875,499 |
| Rio Grande | 1,465,806 | 1,737,164 | 922,634 | 614,354 |
| San Juan | 3,800,801 | 4,050,722 | | |
| Upper Arkansas | 1,548,628 | 1,659,096 | | |
| Upper South Platte | 2,805,115 | 2,079,456 | | |
| TOTALS | 25,514,664 | 26,875,218 | 3,273,984 | 3,327,925 |

Watershed Work Group Recommendations

Common Practices Per Issue

- Grazing Lands
 - Fencing, Livestock Pipeline, Well, Tank or Trough, Spring Development, Prescribed Grazing
 - 40% Fencing, 40% Water Development, 20% Prescribed Grazing
 - Receive requests for what practices are funded.
- Soil Erosion – typical practices include
 - Critical Area Planting, Range Planting, Pasture and Hayland Planting, Terraces, Grassed Waterway, Conservation Tillage, Stripcropping
 - 45% Grass Seedings, 20% Conservation Tillage, 10% Terraces, 10% Stripcropping
- Wildlife/Riparian
 - Streambank and Shoreline Protection, Tree/Shrub Establishment, Windbreak/Shelterbelt Plantings, Dike, Pond, Riparian Forest Buffer, Fence, Brush Management, Wildlife Watering Facilities, Restoration of Declining Habitats, Brush Control, Upland And Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
 - Note: the average is equal for implementation.*
- Water Quality / Ag Waste
 - Waste Storage Facility, Waste Utilization, Waste Treatment Lagoon, Composting Facility, Roof Runoff Structure, Manure Transfer, Sediment Basin, and Pond Sealing/Lining
 - Note: Development of CNMP Plans*
- Forestland Health
 - Forest Stand Improvement, Prescribed Grazing
- Water Quality / Quantity
 - Cost-Share – Sprinkler Systems, Pumping Plant, Water Control Structures, Underground Pipelines, Gated Pipelines, Microirrigation Systems, Land Leveling, Subsurface Drains, Ditch/Canal Lining, Irrigation Regulating Reservoirs, Irrigation Water Management, Nutrient Management, Pest Management and Subsurface Irrigation Systems
 - Note: Range issues are very broad for each of the watersheds.*
 - 40-60% Underground Pipelines, 20-55% Sprinkler Systems, 15-20% Grated Pipelines, 15-20% Microirrigation Systems, 10% Ditch/Canal Linings, and 10% Management Practices
- Agroforestry
 - Windbreak Renovations and Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment

North Platte-White-Yampa Watershed.

A representative of the watershed was not present at this session.

Recommendations for FY-2006 Funding

Priority Resource Concerns and the percent of funds recommended for each:

- Water Quality/Quantity – 35%
- Rangeland – 30%
- Wildlife – 15%
- Riparian – 10%
- Forest – 2.5%
- Animal Waste Management – 2.5%
- Invasive Plant Control – 5%

Proposed Cost-Share Rate:

- 50% for all practices; Except
- 75% for head gate irrigation diversions on rivers and streams
- 75% for all riparian practices
- 75% for wildlife practices that benefit Sage Grouse or Columbia Sharp-tailed Grouse

Contract Cap

- \$ 75,000 contract cap
- Recommend no other caps

FY-2005 EQIP Funding Allocations

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Original Allocation | \$719,453 | | Actual Allocation | \$620,593 |
| Issue Type | Original Dollars Allocated to each issue | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | Dollars Approved |
| Water Quality/Quantity | 251,809 | 18 | 10 | 203,815 |
| Grazing Land | 215,836 | 36 | 17 | 250,315 |
| Wildlife | 107,918 | 7 | 6 | 91,463 |
| Riparian | 71,945 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Forestland | 35,972 | 2 | 1 | 75,000 |
| Water Quality/ Waste Management | 35,973 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 719,453 | 63 | 34 | 620,593 |

Colorado River Watershed.

A representative of the watershed was not present at this session.

Priority Resource Concerns and the percent of funds recommended for each:

- Water Quality/Quantity – 70% (20% water delivery)
- Animal Waste – 15%
- Grazing Lands – 7%
- Wildlife – 3%
- Riparian – 2.5%
- Forest Health – 2.5%

Proposed Cost-Share Rate:

- 50% for all practices; Except
- 75% - Animal Waste
- 75% - Wildlife Practices for Sage Grouse Habitat and Mule Deer

Proposed Caps:

- \$100,000 per contract on all but waste management
- \$125,000 per contract for waste management

FY 2005 EQIP Funding Allocations

| Original Allocation *regular EQIP does not include salinity) | *719,453 | | Actual Allocation | *1,498,529 |
|---|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Original Dollars Allocated to each issue | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | Final Dollars Approved |
| Water Quality/Quantity | 482,034 | 61 | 23 | 899,908 |
| Grazing Land | 71,945 | 10 | 10 | 141,304 |
| Wildlife | 21,584 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Riparian | 17,986 | 9 | 4 | 214,930 |
| Water Quality/Waste Management | 107,918 | 6 | 3 | 147,387 |
| Forestry | 17,986 | 3 | 3 | 95,000 |
| Salinity (Grand Junction) | 974,531 | 72 | 35 | 810,807 |
| Salinity Wildlife | 0 | 3 | 1 | 58,223 |
| Totals | 1,693,984 | 165 | 79 | 2,367,559 |

Gunnison / Dolores Watershed (EQIP)

No representation present

Need irrigation division structure, flows directly off the river. The currently in place are old and need to be replaced. Water flows directly from the stream to the farm.

Question: is there guidance to address this issue

Response: they have been given the guidance

Question: can they leave out any issue?

Response: yes, not always required.

Question: why is there not a cap on waste management?

Response: Two watersheds have very few Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) within the watersheds; water quality issue needs to be addressed

Priority Resource Concerns and the percent of funds recommended for each:

- Water Management – 50%
- Grazing Lands – 15%
- Waste Management – 15%
- Wildlife – 10%
- Riparian – 5%
- Forest Health – 5%

Proposed Cost-Share Rate:

- 50% for all practices; Except:
- 75% - Irrigation Diversion Structures
- 75% - All Animal Waste Practices
- 60% - Riparian Projects
- 75% - for Wildlife Projects for Sage Grouse and other declining species

Proposed Cost-Share Cap:

- \$150,000 Contract Cap and NO cap on waste mgmt

FY-2005 Funding Allocations

| <u>Original Allocation</u> <u>(*regular EQIP</u> <u>does not include</u> <u>salinity or CNMP)</u> | <u>*719,453</u> | | <u>Actual Allocation</u> | <u>*532,546</u> |
|--|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| | <u>Original Dollars</u> <u>Allocated to each</u> <u>issue</u> | <u># Applications</u> <u>Received</u> | <u># Applications</u> <u>Approved</u> | <u>Dollars Approved</u> |
| Water | | | | |
| Quality/Quantity | 359,727 | 27 | 12 | 503,296 |
| Grazing Land | 107,918 | 7 | 4 | 29,250 |
| Water Quality/ Waste | | | | |
| Management | 107,918 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wildlife | 71,945 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Riparian | 35,973 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Forestry | 35,972 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Salinity Delta | 1,974,531 | 80 | 42 | 1,932,324 |
| Salinity Montrose | 2,074,532 | 109 | 59 | 2,186,289 |
| Salinity Wildlife | 0 | 31 | 7 | 76,093 |
| CNMP | 500 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 4,769,016 | 260 | 124 | 4,727,252 |

San Juan River Basin Watershed (EOIP)

A representative of the watershed was not present at this session.

Priority Resource Concerns and the percent of funds recommended for each:

- Water Quality/Quantity– 35%
- Soil Erosion – 15%
- Grazing Lands – 15%
- Forest Management – 15%
- Wildlife – 10%
- Riparian – 10%

Proposed Cost-Share Rate:

- 50% for all practices; Except
- 75% for Terraces and grass waterways for soil erosion control

Proposed Cost-Share Cap:

- \$95,000 Contract Cap

FY-2005 Funding Allocations

| Original Allocation(*regular EQIP does not include Salinity) | *719,453 | | Actual Allocation | *1,496,020 |
|--|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | Original Dollars Allocated to each issue | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | Dollars Approved |
| Water Quality / Quantity | 287,781 | 81 | 58 | 894,616 |
| Grazing Land | 143,890 | 13 | 9 | 78,405 |
| Soil Erosion | 143,891 | 3 | 3 | 71,721 |
| Forestland | 71,945 | 18 | 17 | 247,476 |
| Wildlife | 71,946 | 6 | 4 | 34,175 |
| Southern Ute | 100,000 | 2 | 2 | 37,204 |
| Ute Mountain Ute | 100,000 | 1 | 1 | 132,423 |
| Salinity - McElmo | 874,531 | 37 | 21 | 540,952 |
| Salinity - Mancos | 1,416,831 | 26 | 12 | 1,967,845 |
| Salinity - Wildlife | 174,531 | 5 | 4 | 45,905 |
| Totals | 3,385,346 | 192 | 131 | 4,050,722 |

Rio Grand Watershed (EQIP) -

Comment: Issues are Bio, infectious bugs, renewable energy. Bio is San Luis Valley, Solar may help with the mountain wells, heating stock watering; we have quite a few limited resource farmers.

Question: Why remove caps if only funding at 50%?

Response: the contracts are self-limiting; they want flexibility to go to the limit (of funding), need special approval from the STC and this would avoid that.

Priority Resource Concerns and the percent of funds recommended for each:

- Water Quality/Quantity– 50%
- Soil Quality – 10%
- Grazing Lands – 15%
- Riparian & Wetlands (wildlife) – 15%
- Forest Health – 1%
- Waste Management – 2%
- Integrated Pest Management – 3% (new) (invasive species control)
- Renewable Energy – 4% (new)

Proposed Cost-Share Rate:

- 50% for all practices; Except
- 75% for Acequia/Vara Strips under Water quality/quantity
- 60% for reseeding practices under soil erosion issue

Proposed Cost-Share Caps:

- No contract caps except
- \$ 7,500 cap on Acequia/Vara Strip projects

FY 2005 Funding Allocations

| Original Allocation(*regular EQIP does not include GSWC) | *1,007,235 | | Actual Allocation | *1,737,164 |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | Original Dollars Allocated to each issue | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | Dollars Approved |
| Water Quality / Quantity | 443,618 | 103 | 39 | 1,026,084 |
| Acequais | 60,000 | 53 | 22 | 75,207 |
| Soil Erosion | 100,724 | 2 | 2 | 7,329 |
| Grazing Land | 201,447 | 52 | 34 | 255,565 |
| Riparian & Wetland | 100,723 | 9 | 7 | 189,205 |
| Water Quality/Waste Management | 70,506 | 27 | 19 | 183,774 |
| Forestland | 30,217 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| GSWC | 461,433 | 60 | 29 | 614,354 |
| Totals | 1,468,668 | 306 | 152 | 2,351,518 |

Upper South Platte Watershed (EQIP)

Roy Bell representing the watershed

Priority Resource Concerns and the percent of funds recommended for each:

- Water Quality/Quantity – 28%
- Soil Erosion on Cropland – 21%
- Grazing Land – 28%
- Waste Management – 9%
- Wildlife – 5%
- Forestry – 9%

Proposed Cost-Share Rate:

- 50% for all practices; Except
- Grazing Land – 70% for fencing & water development (off stream)
- Soil Erosion – 75% for grass seeding on rangeland & farmland; 75% for terracing, erosion control structures, grassed waterways
- Wildlife – 75% for shallow water development, grass seeding, wetland development, tree & shrub planting, & river restoration

Proposed Cost-Share Caps:

- All Issues \$99,000
- \$600/acre cap on all irrigation systems

FY 2005 EQIP Funding Allocations

| Original Allocation(*regul ar EQIP does not include CNMP) | *2,733,922 | | Actual Allocation | *2,078,456 |
|--|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | Original Dollars Allocated to each issue | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | Dollars Approved |
| Water Quality/Quantity | 765,498 | 67 | 43 | 1,033,126 |
| Soil Erosion | 574,124 | 18 | 12 | 136,140 |
| Grazing | 765,498 | 47 | 30 | 621,223 |
| Water Quality/Waste Management | 246,053 | 5 | 3 | 160,160 |
| Wildlife | 136,696 | 7 | 2 | 12,868 |
| Forest Management | 246,053 | 14 | 12 | 114,939 |
| CNMP | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1,000 |
| Totals | 2,733,922 | 160 | 104 | 2,079,456 |

Lower South Platte Watershed (EQIP)

Brian Starkebaum representing the watershed

Priority Resource Concerns and the percent of funds recommended for each:

- Water Quality/Quantity – 35%
- Soil Erosion – 20%
- Grazing Lands – 25%
- Waste Management – 10%
- Wildlife – 5%
- Agri-Forestry (windbreaks/shelter belts) – 5%

Proposed Cost-Share Rate:

- 50% for all practices, except:
- 75% for shortgrass prairie reseeding
- 75% for water development practices on grazing lands
- 75% for water control structures and Mid grass seedings for wildlife

Proposed Contract Caps:

- \$75,000 Contract Cap on all issues except:
- \$35,000 for wildlife issue contracts, and
- \$10,000 for agroforestry contracts
- **Contract Caps**
 - \$300/ac on sub surface drip irrigation
 - \$200/ac on all other irrigation practices\

| Original Allocation(*regular EQIP does not include GSWC or CNMP) | *1,438,906 | | Actual Allocation | *2,819,989 |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | Original Dollars Allocated to each issue | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | Dollars Approved |
| Water Quality/Quantity | 503,617 | 103 | 36 | 1,086,445 |
| Grazing Land | 359,727 | 44 | 30 | 569,414 |
| Soil Erosion | 287,781 | 30 | 26 | 513,272 |
| Water Quality/Animal Waste | 143,891 | 16 | 11 | 573,807 |
| Wildlife | 71,945 | 8 | 6 | 32,284 |
| Agro Forestry | 71,945 | 17 | 14 | 44,767 |
| CNMP | 1,000 | 4 | 4 | 2,000 |
| GSWC | 150,000 | 7 | 3 | 49,066 |
| GSWC-Outside High Plains | 200,000 | 36 | 20 | 659,319 |
| Totals | 1,789,906 | 265 | 150 | 3,530,374 |

Republican River Watershed (EQIP)

Harley Ernst represented the watershed.

Comment – the numbers show less than 50% funding, low percent of funding for ground and surface water. District will recommend increase of local funding. From \$175 to \$550 and from \$300 to \$900/acre.

Response – attempting to make EQIP as attractive as the CREP program to the producers. We are hopeful to recommend higher incentives; also promoting as a financially viable alternative for funding.

Comment – 75% funding is needed. Terraces – we are looking at a rebuild. It is hard to get the water to the pastures; need more incentives for these areas.

Priority Resource Concerns and the percent of funds recommended for each:

- Water Quality/Quantity – 30%
- Soil Erosion – 15%
- Grazing Lands – 30%
- Waste management – 15%
- Wildlife – 5%
- AgroForestry – 5%

Proposed Cost-Share Rate:

- 50% for all practices; Except
- 75% for windbreaks/shelterbelts, renovations and terraces
- 75% for grazing land water development practices
- 75% for short- and mid-grass seedings, and riparian and wetland fencing
- 75% for animal waste projects

Proposed Contract Caps

- \$99,000 on water quality/quantity, grazing land and waste management contracts
- \$70,000 on soil erosion and agroforestry
- \$50,000 on wildlife issue contracts

| Original Allocation(*regular EQIP does not include GSWC or CNMP) | *2,446,142 | | Actual Allocation | *2,267,223 |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | Original Dollars Allocated to each issue | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | Dollars Approved |
| Water Quality/Quantity | 733,843 | 41 | 5 | 119,656 |
| Soil Erosion | 366,921 | 39 | 23 | 319,084 |
| Grazing Land | 733,842 | 64 | 23 | 324,243 |
| Water Quality/Animal Waste | 366,921 | 28 | 24 | 1,431,683 |
| Wildlife | 122,307 | 5 | 2 | 11,733 |
| Agro Forestry | 122,308 | 44 | 32 | 60,824 |
| CNMP | 0 | 5 | 4 | 2,000 |
| GSWC | 1,400,000 | 103 | 24 | 875,499 |
| Totals | 3,846,142 | 329 | 137 | 3,144,722 |

Upper Arkansas Watershed (EQIP)

Robert Cordova represented the watershed.

The watershed is having difficulty with the chemical mixing pads. Higher cost share rate is needed to get producers attention. We have a need for water.

For assistance with noxious weeds, the pest management practices and address this issue. There are incentives for up to three years, \$5/acre.

Priority Resource Concerns and the percent of funds recommended for each:

- Water Quality/Quantity – 35%
- Soil Erosion – 15%
- Grazing Lands – 35%
- Forest Land – 5%
- Wildlife and Endangered Species – 5%
- Noxious Weeds – 5%

Proposed Cost-Share Rate:

- 50% for all practices; Except
- 75% for wildlife practices that benefit at-risk species

Proposed Cost-Share Caps:

- \$50,000 per contract
- Recommend no per acre cap on irrigation projects

| Original Allocation(*regular EQIP does not include CNMP) | *1,295,016 | | Actual Allocation | *1,598,992 |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | Original Dollars Allocated to each issue | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | Dollars Approved |
| Water Quality/Quantity | 453,256 | 63 | 45 | 725,492 |
| Soil Erosion | 194,252 | 14 | 9 | 96,784 |
| Grazing | 453,256 | 58 | 33 | 578,319 |
| Forestland | 64,751 | 5 | 5 | 159,107 |
| Wildlife/Declining Species | 129,501 | 10 | 5 | 39,290 |
| CNMP | 0 | 4 | 4 | 60,104 |
| Totals | 1,295,016 | 154 | 101 | 1,659,096 |

Lower Arkansas Watershed (EQIP)

No representative present.

Issues with invasive species, mostly the Russian olive and tamarisk. Again, use the pest Management practice to control.

Priority Resource Concerns and the percent of funds recommended for each:

- Water Quality/Quantity – 35%
- Soil Erosion – 10%
- Grazing Lands – 40%
- Animal Waste – 5%
- Wildlife – 5%
- Invasive Species – 5%

Proposed Cost-Share Rate:

- 50% for all practices; Except
- 75% for water supply development, cross fencing, and brush management under the grazing lands and invasive species issue
- 75% for wildlife practice benefiting at-risk species

Proposed Cost-Share Caps:

- \$600/acre for irrigation systems
- \$ 95,000 Contract Cap

| | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Original Allocation (*regular EQIP does not include GSWC or CNMP) | *2,590,032 | | Actual Allocation | *4,538,165 |
| | | | | |
| | Original Dollars Allocated to each issue | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | Dollars Approved |
| Water Quality/Quantity | 453,256 | 107 | 59 | 1,589,609 |
| Water Quality/Quantity-AIT | 453,255 | 5 | 3 | 119,329 |
| Grazing Land | 388,505 | 158 | 62 | 1,958,048 |
| Soil Erosion | 906,511 | 35 | 20 | 389,979 |
| Water Quality/Animal Waste | 181,302 | 12 | 8 | 451,599 |
| Wildlife | 207,203 | 42 | 4 | 29,601 |
| CNMP | 0 | 8 | 8 | 4,000 |
| GSWC | 1,000,000 | 81 | 23 | 1,129,687 |
| Totals | 3,590,032 | 448 | 187 | 5,671,852 |

Dawn Jackson reported that the Ground and Surface Water Conservation (GSWC) Program can provide cost-share and incentive payments for practices that meet the following criteria:

- Improve irrigation systems
- Enhance irrigation efficiencies

Land Use Conversion Recommendations Include:

- Establish GSWC incentive to convert irrigated land to dryland farming/ranching wildlife habitat
- Temporary conversion - \$50/acre for 3 years, \$415 per acre total
- Extended conversion - \$90/acre for 3 years, \$270/acre total
- Permanent conversion - \$150/acre for 3 years, \$450/acre total (requires decommissioning of well)

Conversion to Less Water Intensive Crops

- Establish incentive practice for reduces consumptive use
- Payment to be based on acre inches of water saved

Colorado River Salinity Control

- FY 2004 earmark funds were \$7.7 million
- Can only be used in the Colorado River Basin where NRCS can document that the practices being stalled will reduce salt loading
- Currently, NRCS funding matched by the Salinity Forum – Federal funding does not exceed 50% of the total cost-share to install practices – Federal rate shown at 75% to reduce paperwork for local staff

Comments: the Republican Watershed proposes to match these funds.

Dawn called on **Jack Barnett, Executive Director, Colorado River Basin Salinity Forum**, for a report on the activities of the forum. He reported that Salinity is the next national menace. He reported that EQIP provides funding to USDA to conduct current Colorado River Basin salinity control activities. NRCS administers the EQIP program to deliver salinity control funding and services to rural landowners and operators, tribes, or other groups. EQIP funds used for piping water, sprinklers, clam farmers, cranberry bogs; as you can see, the program is quite flexible. The new EQIP contracts should have planning funds.

Benefit

From quantified damages \$116 per ton of salt controlled per year (perhaps an equal amount not quantified)

Cost

Ag salinity control costs range from \$20 to \$50 per ton

Ranking

Each year the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (CRBSCF) ranks agricultural salinity control areas on their performance (dollars per ton of salt) and urge Washington, DC, administrators to divide EQIP funds between Utah, Colorado and Wyoming based on this audit. The CRSCF also urges State Conservationists to spend funds in the lowest cost per ton areas.

Damages

Quantified damages downstream at 2004 salinity levels are in the following sectors

Agriculture \$148.3 million

Household \$80.4 million

Commercial \$22.3 million

Utilities \$13.7 million

Industrial \$15.9 million

Policy \$25.6 million

TOTAL \$306.2 million per year.

The total does not include unquantified damages which may be equally as large.

Object of the EQIP Salinity Program

The charge is to offer a program to producers that they will embrace and put some of their own funds into the project so as to benefit water users hundreds of miles downstream in California, Arizona, Nevada, Baja California and Sonora.

In FY-2005, \$19.5 million of financial and technical assistance was allocated to salinity control activities from USDA's EQIP to seven project areas in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. These funds were used to share the cost with landowners and operators to install conservation systems that provide salinity control and wildlife habitat replacement. EQIP also provided funding to allow the NRCS to deliver technical, informational and educational assistance to clients. Currently, USDA is providing technical and financial assistance to landowners and operators

to implement on-farm salinity control measures in seven approved project areas in three Upper Basin states. There are 581,000 potential irrigated acres in the project area. In 2005, \$1.2 billion was appropriated to the EQIP base and \$19,537,700 was allocated to the Colorado River Basin (CRB) Salinity.

In 2005, approximately \$34 million was directed towards salinity control actions in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. These funds were the combination of EQIP; costs share from the Basin State Parallel Program, and expenditures for investigations, contract servicing, and monitoring and evaluation.

Several new projects areas or expansion were being investigated in 2004. All of these areas are primarily irrigated crop or hayland. Plans exist to investigate additional areas in 2005 and beyond. Some of the new areas will include non-irrigated grazing land in addition to irrigated cropland.

Project offices continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of salinity control, wildlife habitat and economic performance replacement in order to improve overall performance and management of the program. The program continues to function effectively and economically, though the overall cost per ton of salt control is gradually increasing. It is also noted that additional efforts are needed to identify and implement valuable, low-maintenance, sustainable wildlife habitat replacement. Monitoring and evaluation reports are available at www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/salinity/index.html.

Requests from framers and ranchers for financial and technical assistance continue to exceed available resources. Over one half of the basin wide salt control goal has been obtained. Many of the earliest systems are nearing the end of their planned and useful life. Replacement of these aging systems has been estimated to cost nearly \$30 million annually. This amount would be in addition to the cost of the current program. The survey conducted in 2002-2003 indicates that most clients are maintaining and operating their systems very near the design parameters. Several years of drought conditions have likely contributed to more intensive irrigation water management. Treatment in the seven approved project areas has been accelerated due to the increased funds made available from the 2002 Farm Bill (FSRIA) along with the cost sharing made available from the Basin States Parallel Program. USDA will continue to investigate new areas for salt control outside of the existing project areas as well as support research to identify new salt control technology.

Need to deal with the producers as they are the tool to implement salinity control; pay producers enough cost share to entice them to participate; appropriate cost share depends on the area; and we need all producers engaged in the program to reduce salinity downstream.

Allen indicated that we need input and what are the challenges needed to meet these challenges. The cost share percentages are hard to defend above the 50% rate; use cost share to plant trees in eastern Colorado; need to deal with the noxious weeds - -what should we do to make and impact on this problem; deal with the invasive species problem.

Dawn reported on the GSWC Program

The program can provide cost share and incentive payments for practices that:

- Improve irrigation systems
- Enhance irrigation efficiencies
- Convert to dryland farming or production of less water-intensive crops
- Increase ground water recharge/water banking

GSWC – Land Use Conservation Recommendations

- Establish GSWC incentive to convert irrigated land to dryland farming/ranching wildlife habitat
- Temporary conservation - \$50/acre for three years - \$150 per acre total
- Extended conversion - \$90/acre for three years - \$270/acre total
- Permanent conversion - \$150/acre for three years - \$450/acre total (required decommissioning of well)

GSWC – Conversion to Less Water Intensive Crops

- Establish incentive practice for reduced consumptive use
- Payment to be based on acre inches of water saved
-

Colorado River Salinity Control

- FY 2004 earmark - \$7.7 million
- Can only be used in the Colorado River Basin where NRCS can document that the practices being installed will reduce salt loading

- Currently, NRCS funding matched by Salinity Forum – Federal funding does not exceed 50% of the total cost share to install practices - Federal rate shown at 75% to reduce paperwork for local staff

Dawn presented the following Discussion Points

- **Invasive Species**
- **Renewable Energy**
- **Irrigation Practices – eliminate per acre caps and reduce cost share rate**
- **Declining Species**

▪ **Invasive Species**

Deal with through EQIP. It is a joint effort with CDOT, and some changes, they need to be cooperative with partners.

What is the enforcement language:

There is no language included in the contracts, work with the Pest Management Practices.

Research leads to control of invasive species – the Colorado River Basin is working on this issue

What can be done to control invasive species? Work through your legislators, make them aware of the problem. Work to get funding through the State. Get Grants. Take the lead and work within the watersheds to develop a program.

- Set targets and go after the species that are there, those invading from other states, CUS could help set up a plan to help pay for the next step. Look for proven technologies; good nutrient management. Help (assistance) to the landowners with more costly plans. Input to the Weed Advisory Board, how to prevent spreading from other states, identification of the plants – some come in as ornamental plants. Education is very important. Get the work out.

If funds are given to the watersheds, then what is the plan, what are they going to do with the funds they receive. Need to have a plan in place. How to impact. Need projects, proposals - matching funds. This is a state-wide issue. Do we need greater benefits?

Questions – funds in EQIP are tied to coordinated efforts.

Response: use state-level set aside funds to try to encourage getting state funds.

NRCS has been trying to assist with this problem. We can cost. We are hearing there is a need for a big push to do more, what about spraying. Everyone needs to work together on this issue or we will not be successful in getting rid of invasive species. Tie this to EQIP.

Colorado Department of Wildlife Species (list of 53) in Upper Arkansas Watershed

| Species | Rank | Mapped Distribution (yes/No) |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Mountain Plover | 12 | N |
| Lesser Prairie Chicken | 14 | Y |
| Bald Eagle | 15 | Y |
| Black-tailed Prairie Dog | 17 | Y |
| Burrowing Owl | 22 | Y |
| Plains Minnow | 23 | N |
| Swift Fox | 27 | Y |
| Long-billed Curlew | 35 | N |
| Ferruginous Hawk | 36 | N |
| Arkansas Darter | 39 | Y |
| Piping Plover | 45 | Y |
| Western Snowy Plover | 46 | N |
| Least Tern | 51 | Y |
| Northern Bobwhite Quail | (no information) | Y |

Additional Species (either Federal T&E or State T&E, SC)

| Species | Status | Mapped Distribution (yes/no) |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Flathead Chub | SC | N |
| Plains Leopard Frog | SC | N |
| Couch's Spadefoot | SC | N |
| Common Kingsnake | SC | N |
| Texas Horned Lizard | SC | N |
| Massasauga | SC | N |

Middle South Platte-Sterling Watershed List of Threatened, Endangered and Species of Concern for CSP 2006

| Species | Habitat | Map |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| <u>Mammals</u> | | |
| Swift Fox | Short grass prairie | Y |
| Black-tailed prairie dog | Short grass prairie | Y |
| <u>Birds</u> | | |
| Bald Eagle | Riparian | Y |
| Plains sharp-tailed grouse | Prairie/cropland/riparian | Y |
| Long billed curlew | Midgrass/riparian/wetland | N |
| Mountain plover | Prairie/cropland | N |
| Piping plover | Wetland | Y |
| Burrowing owl | Short grass prairie | Y |
| Ferruginous hawk | Short grass prairie | N |
| Peregrine falcon | Midgrass | N |
| Least tern | Riparian/wetland | Y |
| Greater prairie-chicken | Prairie/sandsage/cropland | Y |
| Northern bobwhite quail | Riparian/cropland | Y |
| <u>Reptiles</u> | | |
| Common garter snake | Riparian | N |
| <u>Amphibians</u> | | |
| Northern cricket frog | Wetland/riparian | N |
| Northern leopard frog | Wetland/riparian | N |
| <u>Fish</u> | | |
| Suckermouth minnow | Riparian | N |
| Brassy minnow | Riparian | N |

▪ **Renewable Energy**

Bio Fuels, Solar Energy. Forestry has a infra structure for Bio Mass. There are no available industries or markets to take the mass of the product. Use the watersheds to look at this issue state-wide.

There are new energy bills have been passed, presented by Senator Salazar. We may be able to get funds for a serious project. This issue (Energy) is too big for EQIP funding. USDA funds through Rural Development, we need to tie into their areas if expertise.

▪ **Declining Species**

Question: Cost share percentages available; what is an appropriate way to request cost share for projects dealing with declining species. What would some reasons that could be stated for the requests.

Comment: list practices and what species will benefit from cost share projects; target the species, list the practices. Be site specific, list the species, and the practices. We will look at your ideas and come up with a slate of practices to be used and then we can cost share (75%).

Question: Waterways (with no economic return) needs a higher rate of cost share. Wildlife cost share – there are a lot of other programs out there that you can get funds for wildlife issues. EQIP can also be used for cost share.

Question: In previous years there were cost per acre caps. Consider taking off the caps. Move the cost share to 40%.

Comment: If future funds are reduced in EQIP, we need to keep funding at 50%. We need to affect more landowners with the cost share funds.

Comment. It is important to get the practices on the ground. The landowner is having trouble getting their share of the 50% funding for the cost share match. Lowering the cost share may hinder the projects because the producers just do not have the funds available to match the cost share.

Comment: Water Quality and Quantity – economic times dictates participation, need to tighten the belts to make this work.

Irrigation Practices – Eliminate Per Acre Caps and Reduce Cost Share Rate

NRCS cannot defend cost-share rates higher than 50%, we have to stay at this rate. The many demands for cost sharing are higher than the resources; we need to show an economic benefit. We need to share it as high priority and target these areas. Some states cost share rate is much lower than Colorado's.

Rangeland -

Cost-share justification is the drought. Once the drought is over, we will need to reduce the cost share amount. We are now out of the drought cycle. We have 23 million acres of rangeland. We have 50%-75% losses on rangeland, high mortality rate on animals. Loss of cattle is down.

Declining Species, Ted Toombs, Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW), reports that there are wildlife projects in the state of Colorado. Suggest state-wide set aside practice as there is a higher quality of wildlife project, this improves quality. Need to develop ranking sheet and rank the process, determine what practices to use, how to improve the delivery of the program

This will show that the state is addressing the concern more effectively. The costs-share amount needs to be raised. Species do have an economic benefit. DOW is sharing the costs of four positions to work on applications for funding and to work with landowners.

If you have funding available, you will get the projects, there is \$1 million state-wide and \$1 million through the watersheds. Promote through the EQIP. Some of this was done through WHIP.

Comment: Some funds are available. It is hard to work with each individual watershed; we need a centralized location to process the requests and funding. Someone is needed to review the projects.

Dawn reported that \$600,000 was spent on WHIP. Wildlife ranking requires a multiple mix of concerns and practices implemented. Salinity projects are separate contracts from wildlife.

Question: EQIP has multiple resource benefits on all projects. How do you obtain wildlife funds?

Ted Toombs responded that EQIP is about working lands. There needs to be special allocations for wildlife. We should not just tack on wildlife requests, 5% is a very small amount to ask for.

Question: what about ground and surface water?

Comment – Non Renewable Resource, ground water is a perfect fit for EQIP funding. There is a set aside program for wells including domestic wells, livestock well, municipality wells – they are all running out of water. Irrigation is back to its' state in the 1950s. Economic return back to rural America. Acre to help economic base. Will help transition is to take place. There is a charge to meet the compact compliance. We realize that there are other issues that exist, and declining water is one. Money would be well spent in the EQIP for well-set aside.

Comment. The purpose is providing the infinite resource. Need to address issues with Nebraska and Kansas regarding the lawsuit over water supplies. The cost of the program is significant and down the road benefits will be seen.

Comment. Benefit for the entire state. We are seeing more and more people moving to the rural areas. It is very important that we protect our water supply. The bottom line is that is we do not address this issue, we will not have water. A solution is to leave the water where it is if we do not need it.

NRCS commented that they support the well set aside program, and to keep land in production and at the same time allow crop production. Dryland farming is in the program. Landowners are putting in their own funds to match federal funds. We like the example that is bring set in some areas.

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Program. EQIP will fund a portion of this program. Twelve projects have been awarded, the amounts were between \$19,240 and \$75,000. Total CIG funding for projects \$727,840. Details of application information to be posted

The 2005 awardees include:

- Irrigation Research Foundation
- Colorado State University (CSU) for four grants
- Sustainable Energy Applications LLC

Longmont Conservation District
Colorado Department of Agriculture
International Center for Appropriate and Sustainable Tech (ICAST)
Colorado River Water Conservation District
Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District
Dolores Conservation District

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). The process is to receive the request for proposal to be initiated for FY-2006, proposals due November 1, 2005. In FY-2005 33 contracts were funded for a total of \$660,432 covering 11,215 acres.

Information is posted on the Colorado website. Requests have not been received at this time.

Conservation Security Program (CSP).

FY-2005 funding included ten watersheds, including three projects with other states.
140 contracts were awarded
\$2,123,233 in payments were made
283,746 acres are under contract

FY-2006 CSP Watershed include the Middle South Platte in Sterling and the Upper Arkansas – John Martin

Resource concerns include:

soil erosion – classic gully and irrigation induced;
soil condition – rangeland site stability and contaminants (commercial fertilizer and N&P; water quality – rangeland hydrologic cycle and inefficient water sue on irrigated lands (using the water received);
water quality – harmful levels of pesticides, excessive nutrients and organics and excessive salinity in ground and surface, excessive suspended sediment and turbidity in surface water;
plant condition – productivity, health and vigor, and noxious and invasive plants.
animals – fish and wildlife: inadequate cover, shelter and food; domestic animals: inadequate quantities and quality of feed and forage and inadequate stock water

Fiscal Year resources concerns include:

soil erosion – ephemeral gully, classic gully and irrigation includes
soil condition – range site stability and compaction
water quantity – rangeland hydrologic cycle, inefficient water use on irrigation and non-irrigated lands;
water quality – harmful levels of pesticides, excessive nutrients and organizes and excessive salinity in ground and surface water; excessive suspended sediment and turbidity in surface water
plant condition – productivity, health and vigor and noxious and invasive plants.
animals –
fish and wildlife: inadequate cover and shelter and plant community fragmentation;
domestic animals: inadequate quantities and quality of feed and forage and inadequate stock water

Discussion – addressing the concerns is required in order to participate at the tier three level. Some watersheds will not qualify – soil surveys and mapping is needed, we may need to use other resources to get this done. Salinity projects – enhancements are there to adopt – mapping

Forest lands – participate in the program, land in private and public.

Once in CSP, annual funding will be received up to ten years. Maintains for past two year and encouraged to take to a higher level. The DOW is working to provide information on species of concern. Species of concern need to be identified at the State Technical Committee meetings. DOW will provide a list to everyone.

Two watersheds will be added this year (90 watersheds need to be added each year). The cycle of eight years will not work unless we have more funding. We recommend that the watersheds to participate in the program.

Tiers for annual funding:

- 1 – annual payment up to five years
- 2 – offered a 5-10 year contract with ability to transition from tire 1, 2 ,3

Four types of payments:

Stewardship rates/acre (county) from national office
Maintenance – maintain conservation practices, 25% of stewardship payment
New contract – to help in transition to higher levels and encourage EQIP funds.
Enhancement payments – recommend specific governing rules and who is to receive payment

Dawn reaffirmed that the NRCS provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain and improve our natural resources and environment.

Lewis Frank, Director, Farm Services Agency (FSA) invited everyone to a Farm Bill Listening Session, October 24, Greeley Highland Grove Park, Greeley, Colorado, 2pm-5pm. The Secretary of Agriculture will be present. The purpose of this session is to listen to comments and concerns. FSA needs input from your state in regard to the Farm Bill. (website: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/products.html>).

There are six areas of concern to identify and address. One issue the Secretary will discuss is the re-enrollment of contracts to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) thru FY 2010. We look to see a lot of activities with the CRP (expired acres). Presently, 2.2 million acres are in CRP. General enrollment will be held for CRP next year.

Randy Loutzenhiser, President, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD), extended an invitation to attend the **CACD Annual Meeting**, November 13-16, Littleton, Colorado, Four Points Sheraton on Hampden and I-25. Conference information is on the CACD website: cacd@cacd.us .

Joan Waldoch, CACD, extended an invitation to the **Water Issues Conference**, October 19. We will be discussing Salinity, CSP, and other issues relating to watersheds. A panel of politicians have been selected to discuss these topics. Time will be allotted for discussion and questions.

Allen Green thanked the attendees for their input and participation. Meeting adjourned at 12:30pm.

Attendees
State Technical Committee Meeting
October 12, 2005

Barnett, Jack, Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum
Briggs, Shane, CDOW
Burwell, Jeff, NRCS
Campfield, Gary, NRCS
Cordova, Bob, CACD
Coryell, Dennis, RRWCD
Davis, Tim, CDOW
Doty, David, NRCS
Ernst, Harley, Cope CD
Frank, Lewis, FSA
Gallagher, Seth, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
Green, Allen, NRCS
Hackett, Jan, Colorado State Forest Service
Horner, Holly, NRCS
Jackson, Dawn, NRCS
James, Travis, NRCS, UT
Johnson, Marc, CSU Extension
Kettler, Steve, US Fish and Wildlife Service
King, Pam, CO State Conservation Board
Koch, Jared, CFB
Knapp, John, NRCS
Loutzenhiser, Randy, CACD
Miller, Steve, NRCS
Murphy, Stan, RRWCD
Neel, Linda, NRCS
Neufeld, Danny, Center CD
Noonan, Bill, USFWS
Pautler, Tim, RRWCD
Puga, Tony, NRCS
Rasmussen, Donna, NRCS
Reddy, Matt, NRCS
Ristau, Randall, CDPHE – WQCD
Richrath, Scott, Colorado Water Resources
Smith, Nancy, The Nature Conservancy
Starkebaum, Brain, Lower South Platte Watershed
Sundstrom, Greg, Colorado State Forest Service
Toombs, Ted, Environmental Defense
Waldoch, Joan, CACD